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Wildlife Damage and Animal Welfare: An Australian Approach

Robert H. Schmidt, Editor, *The Probe*

"Public attitudes to pest management and associated welfare issues are often based on incomplete or misleading information and are strongly influenced by perception and emotion. Decisions cannot therefore be made on the basis of public attitudes per se. However, the general community is demanding to be included in the process for deciding what is acceptable in terms of resource management and livestock production. This extends to pest management."

Sound familiar? Pick a random clump, herd, or gaggle of wildlife damage practitioners at one of the national meetings and the conversation will inevitably steer in this direction. This particular quotation, however, comes from a report¹ issued by the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW), an advisory group to the Australian government. The report begins as follows:

"The control of vertebrate pests in Australia is an emotive subject which is continuing to cause public concern both within Australia and overseas. It has become an issue with national and international implications. For example, the Commonwealth Government receives many letters of complaint from Australians, from European countries, and from the USA about the perceived inhumaneness of vertebrate pest control in Australia. Concerns are expressed not only about control methods but whether the destruction of the animals is necessary.

Public concern, albeit sometimes misplaced, no doubt provides a major impetus for Governments to review the practices they carry out and advocate. Public concern about treatment of animals can also no doubt alter the way in which countries such as Australia are perceived overseas, and affect consumer demand for some of our products. Pest managers, therefore, take account of public opinion but must also try to ensure that the views of the general community, both within Australia and overseas, are based on fact."

The NCCAW approached this task by organizing a Working Group representing a number of stakeholder organizations, whose membership included expertise in wildlife damage management, ecology and physiology, animal welfare, ethics, livestock production, and research. The Working Group held a two-day meeting, the results of which are summarized in this report.

The Working Group recognized that the major introduced species causing damage on a national basis included rabbits, pigs, dogs (dingos and feral dogs), foxes, and goats, although they recognized that other species were causing damage locally. After reviewing the extent of the wildlife damage problem and the methods utilized in Australia for managing this damage, the Working Group identified four areas in particular that should be given priority in wildlife damage research:

1. *Measuring impact* - to enable pest management to be undertaken on a rational basis taking into account the impact of the species causing damage and the long-term benefits as well as the costs of the management program;
2. *Assess humaneness* - regularly review the humaneness of all management methods, both new and old;
3. *Improve existing management methods* - conduct research to determine how existing conventional management materials can be made most humane; and
4. *New methods* - undertake research on the possibility of developing alternative management methods which are both humane and effective.

They noted that "Public opposition to some pest control operations is based partly on the assertion that the need for control has not been objectively assessed and that the welfare 'costs' associated with the control operation are not justified in terms of the

See Animal Welfare Attitudes in Australia, page 5

¹NCCAW. 1992 Vertebrate pest control and animal welfare. Department of Primary Industries and Energy, Canberra, Australia. 50 pp. Copies of this report are available from: The Animal Welfare Unit, Department of Primary Industries and Energy, GPO Box 858, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

August 3-7, 1992: Bird Strike Committee—USA, FAA Regional Office, JFK International Airport, Jamaica, NY, will include two days of conference papers and a one-day field trip. Contact: James Forbes, USDA/APHIS/ADC, P.O. Box 97, Albany, NY 12201, (518) 472-6492.

August 25-27, 1992: 2nd North American Wolf Symposium. Contact: L.N. Carbyn, University of Alberta, Canadian Circumpolar Institute, 215 Central Academic Bldg., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G1.

September 11-16, 1992: International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting, Portside Marriott, Toledo, OH. Contact: Richard Pierce, Chief, Ohio Division of Wildlife, 1840 Belcher Dr., Columbus, OH 43224-1339. (614) 265-6300.

September 13-16, 1992: International Conference on Avian Interactions with Utility Structures, Hotel International, Miami, Florida. Will focus on avian interactions with powerlines, towers, buildings, and aircraft. Contact: Ed Colson, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 3400 Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon, CA 94853, (510) 866-5461; FAX (510) 866-5318.

September 17-19, 1992: 5th U.S./Mexico Border States Conference on Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife, Hilton Hotel, Las Cruces, NM. Contact: Border Research Institute, New Mexico State University, Box 30001, Dept. 3BRI, 1200 University Avenue, Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001.



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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month.

March 19-24, 1993: North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Washington, D.C. Sponsored by The Wildlife Society. *CALL FOR PAPERS:* Session chairs eagerly solicit preliminary abstracts of proposed papers. Topics may include, but are not limited to: Biological and Ecological Studies As Bases for Management; Habitat Fragmentation and Wildlife Populations; Wildlife Use of Habitat Corridors; Management Case Studies; Deer Ecology and Management; Waterfowl Ecology and Management; Ecology and Management of Remnant Habitats; and Restoration and Management of Disturbed Sites. *Original and five copies must be received by September 1, 1992.* For more information, contact Dr. Lowell W. Adams, Chair, National Institute for Urban Wildlife, 10921 Trotting Ridge Way, Columbia, MD 21044, Phone: (301) 596-3311, or Dr. John M. Hadidian, Cochair, Center For Urban Ecology, National Park Service, 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20242, Phone: (202) 342-1443.

April 26-29, 1993: 11th Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop, Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, MO. For further information, contact: F. Robert Henderson, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, Kansas State University, (913) 532-5654, or Robert A. Pierce II, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, University of Missouri, (314) 882-7242.

May 25-26, 1993: The Wild Pig in California Oak Woodland: Ecology and Economics. Embassy Suites Hotel, San Luis Obispo, CA. Contact: Dr. William Tietje, Forestry & Resource Management, 2156 Sierra Way, Suite C, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. (805) 549-5940.

July 4-10, 1993: Sixth International Theriological Congress, Sydney, Australia. This is an international meeting of scientists interested in mammalogy, and will include symposia and workshops including such topics as population biology of mammals, the role of disease in population regulation, and wildlife management. Will include sessions on *Management of Problem Wildlife and Predation As a Regulator of Mammal Populations*. For further information, write: The Secretariat, 6th Int'l Theriological Congress, School of Biological Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2033.

October 1993: 6th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference, Asheville, NC. For further information, contact: Peter R. Bromley, Ext. Wildlife Specialist, NC State University, (919) 515-7587.

Proceedings Available

Tenth Great Plains Wildlife Damage Control Workshop Proceedings. Includes 43 papers. Sessions included: Wildlife Damage Management and the Public, Predators, Rodents, Birds, Programs and Projects, USDA-APHIS-ADC Activities, and Professionalism. 180 pages. Send \$15 per copy (check, purchase order or money order) to: GPWDCW Proceedings, 202 Natural Resources Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0819.

Animal Damage Control in the News

Prairie Dog Vacuum Less Than Successful

A park in Fort Larned, Kansas, has been experimenting with "vacuuming" prairie dogs as part of its attempt to control the number of prairie dogs in an area that contains original Santa Fe Trail wagon ruts. A contract was issued to "Dog-Gone"™ of Cortez, Colorado, which employed a converted street-cleaning vacuum to remove prairie dogs from their holes. (See *Probe* #114, September 1991, page 3). One half day was spent filling in holes, then two days vacuuming holes that had been reopened. The results were somewhat disappointing. Ten dogs were picked up; all were alive and in good condition, but a bit disoriented. The recovered prairie dogs were turned over to the state of Kansas for placement in their Prairie Dog State Park.



DWRC Assists Developing Countries to Increase Food Availability

The Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) has for many years implemented programs for the international donor community to increase available food supplies for subsistence farmers in developing countries by reducing losses to vertebrate pests. In May, the Washington-based Population Crisis Committee published the results of its study, titled International Human Suffering Index. This study ranks 141 countries on the basis of 10 indicators of human well being, one of which is daily food availability. Of the 15 countries ranked as the worst places to live on earth, DWRC has provided short-term assistance to 10 (Mozambique, Somalia, Haiti, Sudan, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Guinea-Bissau, and Chad), and managed in-country field stations in 3 (Haiti, Sudan, and Chad). While increasing food availability is only one of many criteria necessary to reduce the level of suffering in these and other developing countries, this study shows that efforts in this area are still very much needed for many of the world's poorest countries, and that a role still exists for DWRC's expertise.

New Livestock Protection Collar Improves Protection Results

A new configuration of the Livestock Protection Collar (LPC) has been found effective for use on larger sheep or goats. The LPC currently approved for use with Com-pound 1080 formulation registered by the Environmental Protection Agency effectively removes coyotes that attack lambs and kids weighing less than 50 pounds but is not recommended for use on larger livestock. DWRC biologists Doris Zemlicka and Dick Burns recently completed tests with captive coyotes using a different configuration of LPC that contained the registered quantity and formulation of 1080 but covered a greater surface area of an animal's throat. In these tests, 71 percent (10 of 14) of the coyote attacks to the throats of 57-80 pound lambs resulted in punctured collars. All coyotes that punctured a collar died as a result of ingesting the toxic formulation. These results suggest that the new collar configuration could allow use of LPCs on greater numbers of animals or could extend the time period during which collars could be effectively used in protecting livestock.

Solano Beach Pet Owners Object to Coyote Trapping

Although coyotes have hit the Solano Beach, California, pet population hard this spring, some pet owners object to the use of leg-hold traps. According to a report in the March 3 issue of the *Solano Beach Sun*, the depredation on local dogs and cats became so severe, USDA trappers resorted to the leg-hold traps. But some residents, like Gay Pink, are upset with the operation. "This is indiscriminant trapping. Who knows what's being caught in those traps?" asked Pink.

Other pet owners oppose Pink's position. For Jeanne Hansen, the nightmare of seeing her golden retriever puppy torn apart by a coyote is something she won't soon forget. Hansen is concerned about the possible danger for other pets and for small children. "If the coyotes want to hunt possum, that would be OK...but I think that protecting one child is worth 10 coyotes," she said. An estimated 25-30 coyotes are thought to live in the area just north of Solano Beach.

The editors of The Probe thank contributors to this issue: Dennis Slate, Ron Thompson, Tom Hoffman, James E. Forbes, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to The Probe, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.

Nebraska Sheep Producers Reveal Attitudes Toward Predators

Dale Hafer and Scott Hyngstrom, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Although most western states conduct surveys to determine losses of livestock to predators, we know little about the attitudes of our producers toward those losses. Sure, sheep producers are not crazy about coyotes, but research is needed to determine trends in losses and tolerance levels. We surveyed 355 Nebraska sheep producers through mail and follow-up telephone questionnaires. An 89% response rate may be an indication of the level of interest in the subject.

Thirty-eight percent of the producers reported losses of sheep and lambs to predators in 1990. Respondents indicated that coyotes were the major predator responsible for 86% and 88% of the sheep and lamb losses respectively. Because of predator impacts, producers revealed a high degree of polarity against coyotes. Eighty-four percent felt coyotes are a serious threat to the sheep industry, 84% felt coyote numbers have increased since 1985, and 79% felt that there are too many coyotes.

Most producers were tolerant of losses less than \$100 but were more concerned as damage surpassed \$500. Eighty percent considered damage more than \$1,000 as severe.

Damage levels varied with the type of sheep operation managed. Producers who managed ranch/rangeland operations experienced much higher levels of damage, with 90% reporting predator-related losses. Most producers (54%) stated their losses to predators had increased since 1985.



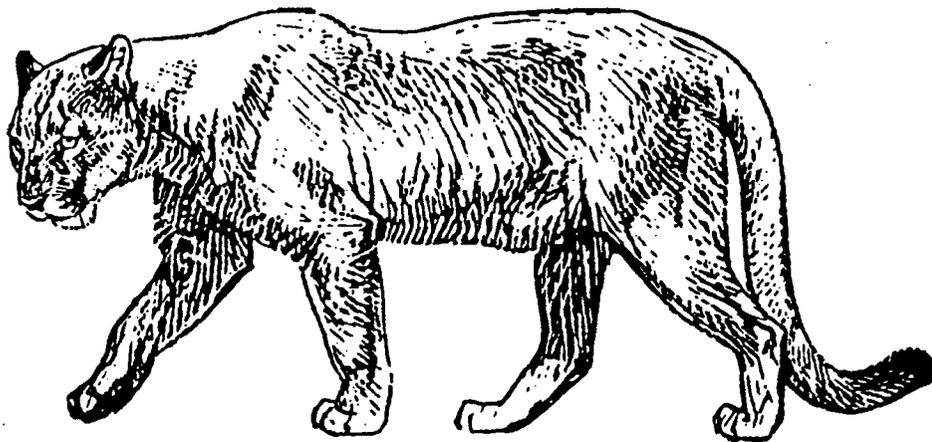
USDA Livestock Depredation Survey

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA) has completed a survey of cattle and sheep losses in the United States that were caused by predators.

The resulting information indicates that 106,000 head of cattle and calves or 2.4% were killed by predators, valued at \$41.5 million in 1991. Coyotes were responsible for the loss of 65,900 cattle and calves (61.9%) of the total loss to predators, which were valued at \$24.3 million.

The percentage of predator loss was 1.5% on cattle and 3.1% on calves. The percentage of the predation loss that was due to coyotes was 18.2% for cattle and 60.5% on calves. The percentage of the predator loss that was due to mountain lions was 36.4% on cattle and 14% on calves.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA) has also completed a survey on sheep losses in the United States that were caused by predators. The resulting information indicated that 490,000 head of sheep and lambs valued at \$21.7 million were killed by predators in 1990. Coyotes were responsible for 63.7 percent of the total sheep and lamb loss, valued at \$13.6 million.



Vermont Citizens Find APHIS/ADC Rabies Hotline Contagious

ADC was asked by Vermont Governor Howard Dean to participate on a Rabies Task Force to identify statewide rabies management strategies for disease surveillance, population management and public education. Based on the Task Force findings, ADC proposed a cooperatively funded program between ADC and Vermont's Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Agriculture, Health, and Public Safety that uses a 1-800 "rabies hotline" approach to help meet the management and education objectives identified by the Task Force.

Two strains of rabies are currently of concern in Vermont—a strain of rabies in which the red fox is the primary vector that entered northwestern Vermont from either New York or Quebec earlier this year, and the mid-Atlantic strain or "raccoon rabies" that is expected to hit Vermont's southern borders by 1993.

Continued from page 1

Animal Welfare Attitudes in Australia

'gains' received." They recommended that, until there is evidence to the contrary, "...investigators must assume that animals experience pain in a manner similar to humans."

A few of the Working Group's specific recommendations included:

- ban the sale and use of strychnine
- review the humaneness of all other poisons currently in use and seek more humane substitutes
- improve target specificity of baits
- ensure the continued availability of 1080, "which is recognized as one of the more effective and humane poisons currently available"
- accelerate development of more humane alternatives to toothed leghold traps
- dogs should not be used for killing animals

It is clear that animal welfare concerns are not unique to North America, and that a professional approach to wildlife damage management includes as valid the concerns of a broad spectrum of the various stakeholders. An analysis similar to the one done by the NCCAW should be useful in the United States.

"By taking an active approach to rabies information and education through a toll-free hotline, one important piece to a large and complex management puzzle is in place," said New Hampshire/Vermont ADC State Director Dennis Slate. Slate went on to say that the information service has been operational for several weeks, and is "significant because it provides the public easy access to ADC wildlife biologists who can address questions regarding wildlife and wildlife disease. We believe that an educated and enlightened public is one important way to help reduce risks to public health and safety."

A manual for rabies management, prepared by ADC and agreed on by cooperators, provides a mechanism for addressing or referring calls ranging from livestock vaccination questions to human exposure. When asked about the type of questions he has been asked while staffing the rabies hotline, ADC biologist John Austin responded that questions have ranged from wildlife natural history and behavior inquiries to pet vaccination questions to questions like "Can I get rabies from a dog dish licked by a raccoon?"

"The response to the rabies information service has been very positive," stated Richard Chipman, ADC Wildlife Biologist stationed in Vermont. "The first week we received close to 100 calls from farmers, pet owners, sportsmen, and even veterinarians. We seem to be filling a niche created by public concern over this disease."

Utah Man Wants Compensation For Coyote Attack

Arguing that the state owns all wildlife and is therefore responsible when "one of the animals acts up," a 34-year-old St. Paul, Minnesota, man wants the State of Utah to pay his \$2,000 medical bill. According to a report in the June 1992 *National Wool Grower*, the Minnesotan suffered the injuries when a coyote chewed on his head and neck as he slept at an I-80 rest stop near Green River, Utah.

The victim noticed the coyote when he arrived at the rest stop, but after it left the area, he felt it was safe to fall asleep on the grass. He was awakened by a gnawing sensation on his neck and had to seek medical treatment which included stitches and tetanus shots.

Utah State Risk Management Pool Director Alan Edwards said the state owns its wildlife by law so it can prevent illegal killing, but that it's not a "kennel for animals." The state is denying the plaintiff's claim.

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Membership Application

NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871

Name: _____ Phone: (____) ____ - _____ Home

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Additional Address Info: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Dues: \$ _____ Donation: \$ _____ Total: \$ _____ Date: _____

Membership Class: Student \$7.50 Active \$15.00 Sponsor \$30.00 Patron \$100
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Check or Money Order payable to NADCA

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| <input type="checkbox"/> USDA - Extension Service | <input type="checkbox"/> ADC Equipment/Supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal - not APHIS or Extension | <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____ | |